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Environment and sustainable development: further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Letter dated 30 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of the Bahamas to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

At the request of the Alliance of Small Island States and Small Island Developing States, which participated in the Interregional Preparatory Meeting for the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, held in Nassau, the Bahamas, from 26 to 30 January 2004, I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the proceedings of the Interregional Preparatory Meeting of Small Island Developing States for the International Meeting to Review Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (see annex).

I would request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 94 (d).

(*Signed*) Paulette A. **Bethel**
Permanent Representative of the Bahamas to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 30 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of the Bahamas to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Report of the proceedings of the Interregional Preparatory Meeting of Small Island Developing States for the International Meeting to Review Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

The Interregional Meeting of SIDS, with ministerial participation, inpreparation for the International Meeting to review implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, was held at the Radisson Cable Beach Hotel in Nassau, the Bahamas from 26-30 January 2004. As mandated by Economic and Social Council resolution 2003/55, on the recommendation of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eleventh session, and endorsed by General Assembly resolution 58/213, the Meeting brought together participants from small island developing States (SIDS) and territories which are Associate Members of the related Regional Commissions, observers from donor States and representatives of United Nations agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. More than 300 participants attended the meeting, among them some twenty-two ministers and deputy ministers attended.

The Interregional Meeting set common priorities for all SIDS toward advancing their sustainable development effort, in particular, through the full implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA), adopted at the 1994 Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. An International Meeting to review the implementation of the BPOA, ten years later, will convene in Mauritius during 30 August to 3 September 2004.

The Nassau Interregional Meeting culminated three regional preparatory meetings for SIDS as follows: Pacific SIDS (4-8 August 2003, Apia, Samoa); Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS) SIDS (1-5 September 2003, Praia, Cape Verde); and Caribbean SIDS (6-10 October 2003, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago). The reports of these meetings, regional position papers, as well as the reports of four expert group meetings convened between July and December 2003, in cooperation with UNDP, comprised the background material for the Interregional Meeting.

The Meeting adopted on 30 January 2004 the Nassau Declaration, issued as General Assembly document A/58/709. The Meeting endorsed a Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, as was agreed by ministers and heads of delegation of members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), as a document for

further consideration by the preparatory meeting for the Mauritius International Meeting, to be held from14-16 April 2004 in new York in conjunction with the twelfth session of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD).

The Interregional Meeting was attended by senior officials from the United Nations, including the Secretary-General of the Mauritius International Meeting and High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Mr. Anwarul Chowdhury and the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Jose Antonio Ocampo. Also addressing the opening session were H.E. Mr. Julian Hunt, President of the 58th session of the UN General Assembly and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Saint Lucia; H.E. Mr. Rajesh Bhagwan, Minister of the Environment and National Development of Mauritius on behalf of AOSIS; H. E. Mr. Borge Brende, Minister of Environment of Norway and Chairman of CSD-12; and Ambassador Jamal Nasser Al-Bader of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. H.E. Mr. Perry Christie, Prime Minister of the Bahamas, gave a keynote address.

Minister of Health and the Environment of the Bahamas, H.E. Mr. Marcus Bethel, served as Chairman of the Interregional Meeting. A general debate as well as six panel discussions dealing with new challenges and emerging issues were held, and are briefly summarized below. A drafting group made up of three representatives from each region and chaired by Belize, met throughout the week to finalize the draft outcome documents, which were adopted by all AOSIS members at the close of the meeting.

General Debate

The Ministers and other high-level officials gathered at the Interregional Meeting to review the implementation of the BPoA for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States unanimously emphasized the continued relevance and crucial role played by the Barbados Programme of Action in the shaping of their sustainable development efforts. However, many speakers highlighted a substantial implementation gap due to a lack of political will at the international level and lack of sufficient financial resources to support national and regional efforts.

Several participants voiced their concern that, despite significant efforts and achievements by many SIDS over the last decade, it would be misleading to conclude that SIDS today are in a better position to achieve sustainable development than in 1994. For the majority of SIDS, their critical development needs, especially with respect to the development of their human resources, production capacities and trade relations, were not only increasing, but that SIDS as a group were becoming even more vulnerable.

There was a broad consensus among the officials that, while many environmental concerns were in fact being addressed, it was now essential to ensure better balance with the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, drawing on the useful lessons from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. A number of statements emphasized the need to better link the BPOA with other related multilateral agreements and commitments, such as the Monterrey Consensus and the Millennium Declaration. Many speakers felt that there has been very little synergy and coordination among the mechanisms for implementation of these commitments, and thus highlighted the need to strengthen these global frameworks through the requisite political and financial support.

The lack of financial resources was highlighted by nearly all speakers as a key factor regarding implementation of the BPOA. The declining trend in official development assistance (ODA) from the donor community was noted with concern. Several delegations urged that the proposed outcome document for the Mauritius International Meeting should recommend the establishment of new financial mechanisms accessible and responsive to the sustainable development strategies needs of SIDS.

In this connection, WSSD-type partnerships between SIDS and their development partners were seen by many as a key element in the implementation process of the BPOA. It was also noted that there needs to be a willingness on the part of SIDS to ensure greater transparency and accountability in implementation. The importance of effective monitoring mechanisms, including through institutions like the CSD, was therefore highlighted.

Delegations underscored trade as an important issue for all SIDS. While regional agreements are very important, it was argued that they should complement multilateral processes. The representatives recommended that the Mauritius International meeting encourage progress in the World Trade Organization's Doha Development Round, to enable SIDS, and other developing countries, to participate in a fairer, more open, world trading system. There was a call for leveraged cooperation and support, not in terms of ODA or technical assistance, but through guaranteed improved access for SIDS exports, especially agricultural commodities and raw materials. Concerns about competition due to globalization and the need to incorporate SIDS problems in the overall trade liberalization negotiations were also noted.

The continuing limitations in technical, human and institutional capacity of SIDS were addressed. Policies addressing adaptation to climate change, the loss and protection of biodiversity and coastal and marine resources as well as improved waste management and protection from land-based sources of

marine pollution were also mentioned as areas requiring more attention. It was emphasized that natural and man-made disasters continue to undermine the sustainable development efforts of many SIDS. There was strong support for the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC to be ratified and enter into force.

Delegations noted that since the adoption of the BPOA several new and emerging issues have emerged which were not taken into account in the BPOA itself and would therefore need to be adequately addressed in the outcome of the Mauritius International meeting. These issues include addressing the challenges of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and dengue fever, as well as significant increase in life-style diseases including hypertension and diabetes, developments in information and communications technology; promotion of cultural dimension of sustainable development and the development of cultural industries; and the strengthening of security and governance structures in SIDS to combat corruption and transnational crime.

Delegations recognized the significant role played by regional intergovernmental and technical organizations as well as Regional Commissions in complementing national governments. The importance of strengthening regional mechanisms for enhanced coordination in implementation of the BPOA was emphasized. In this regard, there was a call for early ratification of the decision to have the Indian Ocean Committee serve as the interim coordinating mechanism for the AIMS group.

With respect to the role of the United Nations system for the further implementation and monitoring of the BPOA, various countries strongly supported the continued coordination of SIDS issues within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). It was urged that the SIDS Unit in DESA/Division for Sustainable Development be strengthened and restructured after Mauritius to be able to respond to anticipated new challenges. Many speakers called for the strengthening and expansion of SIDSnet to include a SIDS clearing house to serve as a catalyst for technology transfer and capacity building.

Delegations also highlighted that need for better coordination among the various UN agencies convention secretariats addressing SIDS-specific issues. The need for the strengthening of linkages between the international processes and regional and national implementation regimes was also highlighted.

Another issue of concern to many SIDS and their non-SIDS partners is the question of "graduation" of some SIDS from least developed country (LDC) status, based on several criteria elaborated by a United Nations expert group and agreed by the Economic and Social Council. A number of speakers considered that such graduation?which may imply a loss in development

assistance?places the SIDS in question in an immediately fragile position. Several delegations insisted that LDC graduation criteria should be changed to consider economic and environmental vulnerability criteria which would take account of the special case of SIDS. They urged that any graduations of SIDS be postponed until the issue receives greater attention, including at the Mauritius International Meeting, and that smooth transition measures be put in place.

Many delegations acknowledged that the challenges that confront SIDS are many-faceted, but not insurmountable. Delegations stated that the Mauritius outcome should acknowledge progress and shortcomings in the implementation of the BPoA, and clearly identify further priority action for the sustainable development of SIDS. It was noted that such a result need not be lengthy but should instead be one focused on mobilizing political support for these aims, and ensuring that outcomes from the review process are tightly focused, action oriented and time-bound.

Several delegations made the observation that while the special case for SIDS was recognized in Agenda 21, adopted by the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the BPoA itself and the JPOI, among others, there is a need that this be reiterated even today, ten years on from the adoption of the BPOA. It was suggested by many speakers that AOSIS should be formalized, with representation at all relevant international meetings, to more effectively present the views of SIDS and the common challenges SIDS face.

Representatives of a number of donor countries and UN agencies as well as from regional and non-governmental organizations, also participate in the general debate.

A number of donor countries shared the concern of SIDS that climate variability and climate change continue to pose a major threat to the sustainable and even the survival of a number of SIDS, and agreed that these issues had so far not been adequately addressed. These countries called for a strong message to be issued at the Mauritius International Meeting to push for the ratification and entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. Several donors stressed the importance of renewable energy initiatives, and offered to share their experiences and expertise in this regard. Donors highlighted the urgency to conclude the Doha Round of international trade negotiations, and called for SIDS' greater participation in this process. Some highlighted the removal of trade distorting agricultural subsidies as a priority. One speaker noted the importance of ocean and marine resources for SIDS, and called for improved ocean resource assessments, reporting and management.

Representatives of UN specialized agencies and organizations provided substantial information on ongoing work for SIDS in their respective sectoral areas if expertise, including agriculture and food security, human health, climate change, disaster management, forestry, biodiversity and other environmental issues, as well as regional concerns. Several agencies announced that they would be providing further information during the April preparatory meeting in New York on new or forthcoming activities and reports relevant to SIDS.

Non-governmental organizations speaking in the general debate generally expressed the view that the ten years since Barbados had seen few tangible benefits for SIDS and called for renewed support for the BPOA and related commitments. They urged governments to include targets and time-bound actions in the new implementation strategy and emphasized the importance of ensuring the full participation of civil society in the Mauritius International Meeting. A few NGOs highlighted specific interests and concerns, including fisheries and mariculture, agriculture and food security, effective health management and control of diseases, employment and other social issues.

Panel Discussions

Six panel discussions were held during the Interregional Meeting, each dealing with new challenges and emerging issues that had arisen or had become more pressing since the adoption of the BPOA. SIDS experts as well as representatives of UN agencies and NGOs participated in the panel debates, which were followed by questions and comments from the floor. Brief summaries of the six panels follow.

Panel Discussion I

"New Challenges and Emerging Issues: Integrating Human and Social Development Imperatives"

The discussion focused on issues related to human development, including sustainable livelihoods, healthcare and employment opportunities, and sought to identify practical ways these needs can be addressed by SIDS. Learning from each other's best practices, and sharing this information, was seen as essential means for achieving progress.

Concerning health issues, it was noted with concern that the Caribbean region ranks second only to sub-Saharan Africa in terms of adult HIV/AIDS prevalence, and that many SIDS have had to divert scarce resources from fighting other diseases and health concerns to dealing with HIV/AIDS. In addition, new illnesses such as SARS also present a threat because of the potential adverse impact on tourism. Another health issue relates to the lack of proper treatment

facilities for dealing with solid and liquid wastes, which threaten beaches and hence tourism revenues. The production and use of illicit drugs are also serious problems for many SIDS.

Other social vulnerability issues discussed included the large-scale migration of skilled labour, in particular nurses and teachers, but also, in some cases, armed forces personnel, for better-paying jobs abroad, leading to the loss of trained medical and teaching staff at home. A call was made for the more affluent countries to help pay for the training of these workers in larger numbers. In this context, the importance of South-South and SIDS-SIDS cooperation was raised, with a representative from one Caribbean SID reiterating his Government's previous offer to send trained health workers and teachers to other SIDS facing shortages.

Concerns were also raised about changing cultural expectations, in many SIDS, largely due to the accessibility of satellite TV. One example given was changing eating habits from indigenous to fast foods which has caused increased incidence in obesity, poor nutrition, health complications and higher economic costs.

Better communication tools were seen as essential to link remote SIDS. Improving teaching skills at all levels was deemed crucially important. Another means of capacity building that was discussed was making university curricula in SIDS more applicable to the unique environment of small islands with small populations. The importance of leadership, e.g., in addressing new threats like HIV/AIDS, was raised, as was the lack of "succession planning" in many SIDS.

Community development work, including community policing, after-school programmes (especially music and the creative arts), cultural awareness, and better "listening skills", was highlighted as a practical and achievable means to improve literacy and foster entrepreneurship and empowerment skills, especially in deprived urban areas.

Regarding vulnerability issues, the need to build SIDS' resilience to such challenges as climate change and coastal erosion was stressed. Participants urged the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol to UNFCCC. Many speakers called for special and differential treatment for SIDS within the WTO, saying the current trade rules were not supportive of SIDS. In this connection, attention was drawn to the upcoming World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, to be held in Kobe, Japan in January 2005. It was noted that the vulnerability of SIDS may be even higher now than 10 years ago because of threats from natural disasters. In addition, the important work of civil society relief organizations (such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), which can give immediate help on the spot to help defend SIDS against vulnerabilities and disasters, was mentioned.

The targets and goals contained in the UN Millennium Declaration were seen as a broader framework for addressing sustainable development.

It was noted that the security costs related to new terrorism threats have escalated in many SIDS. The nature of security requires enhanced capacities even in small States and SIDS international cooperation and assistance from developed partners is called for.

Panel Discussion II

"Implementing national sustainable development strategies"

The discussion focused initially on why sustainable development has not been fully integrated into national planning by SIDS. A number of speakers expressed the view that many SIDS initially considered the Barbados Conference and the BPOA more environment-related than about sustainable development. This was partly due to the composition of the Barbados Conference delegations (mostly environment) and partly because of the allocation of responsibility for implementation (also mostly environment). Whatever the reason, it is clear that for Mauritius, there is a need to carry out the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development, in such a way as to ensure the participation of all stakeholders.

One panelist suggested that ministers of finance and planning must be key participants in the development of any national sustainable development strategy, and that one must ensure that they understand the sustainable development perspective. For example, seeing energy efficiency and renewable energy translated directly into money saved is a powerful argument for those that focus on the bottom line.

The need to communicate broadly to communities the fact that protecting the environment also protected their social and economic interests was stressed. Incentives are needed for the business sector to make sustainable development choices in their businesses. The view was expressed that SIDS have to a large extent failed to embrace the sustainable development paradigm and to promote it to businesses. A practical example is the lack of regulations that could force tourism destinations to make a thorough assessment of their carrying capacity.

Given the convergence of their objectives and frameworks for action a suggestion was made for SIDS to link the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals with the efforts towards sustainable development and BPOA implementation. The challenge of meeting the MDGs is great, with the first targets for 2005. Successful national sustainable development strategies, that also meet the MDGs, might be based on an analysis of vulnerability reduction and the promotion of resilience building. It was agreed that the WSSD targets with the MDGs

can be done and should be combined in one national strategic plan to cover all the obligations that SIDS have undertaken. The need to involve civil society beyond simple consultation of civil society as participants integral to the implementation of these plans was stressed.

In this regard the issue of harmonizing the government's approach to donors was highlighted, and the need to establishing with the donors a firm view of government priorities through some form of consultative group was underscored.

Undertaking state-environment reports was considered a very helpful exercise for SIDS, as well establishing or maintaining sustainable development unit in the Ministry of Planning. The challenge remains how to build knowledge and understanding of the principles that underpin sustainable development ? this requires a new modality for work in SIDS. National sustainable development planning is thus a key to implementing the BPOA, and national sustainable development strategies in the SIDS regions should be viewed not as an end but a process.

One panelist stressed that national sustainable development strategies need to include strong educational aspects. The role of higher education must be incorporated into the model of sustainable development in the future. A number of other elements, such as the need for a "champion" for sustainable development at the national level, should not be ignored. There was seen a great role for leaders, and effective assistance from well educated staff to advance knowledge and understanding of the sustainable development paradigm. There was also expressed a need to involve the youth from the early stages in the practice of sustainable development.

It was also noted that the UN agencies do have an important role to play in the facilitation of planning and the development of strategies, but that for SIDS this consideration had not been fully explored. Cross-sectoral issues in national development planning showed the need to have integrated approaches if SIDS are to attain sustainable development.

Panel discussion III

"Enhancing competitiveness: trade, finance, entrepreneurship and partnership"

The discussion was organized around a range of issues relevant to the participation of SIDS in the global economy, the difficulties they face in trying to avoid further marginalization from the global economy in the context of trade liberalization, and the role the United Nations could play in enhancing the usefulness of the SIDS definition in response to these countries' need for special

international support. The contrast between the international recognition of the special characteristics and vulnerability of SIDS and the near-total absence of island-specific special treatment of these countries by their development partners was voiced by the panelists and by several participants as a critical concern in the approach to the International Meeting.

The challenges SIDS face in the context of multilateral trade negotiations were highlighted, through a visual presentation of the latest relevant developments in the World Trade Organization (WTO). The existence of special and differential treatment modalities in the WTO was recalled, but it was also noted that, unlike the Least Developed Countries, SIDS are not singled out as a distinct category in the WTO, and do not enjoy any special treatment on grounds of "small islandness", unless they are also LDCs. Signs of hope on eventual progress toward a better recognition of island-specific issues in the multilateral trading framework were noted, as the panel discussed the various proposals made by SIDS members of the WTO under the Work Programme on Small Economies (WPSE) of that organization, particularly with regard to the continuation of preferential market access, and the importance of relaxing some of the implementation disciplines for the benefit of small countries.

The Caribbean experience in multi-faceted international trade negotiations was singled out as an illustration of the challenge a relatively large number of SIDS may be facing in the context of trade liberalization and globalization. The importance the Caribbean region attaches, through its Regional Negotiating Machinery, to the question of the definition of the SIDS category was highlighted, as was the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiation process, which in principle has entered its last year. The flexibility that is built in the negotiations to accommodate the needs and expectations of Caribbean SIDS was described as critically important, and seen by the panel as reflecting an effort, on the part of regional partners, to introduce a measure of differentiation in the treatment of SIDS at the regional level. It was noted, however, that negotiations on special and differential treatment, in the making of the FTAA, are still far from completion if the expected special treatment of SIDS is to go beyond mere technical assistance or transitional measures.

The question of the credibility of the United Nations efforts to advocate the case for a special consideration of SIDS was seen as an issue of particular importance in the context of SIDS efforts to gain more differentiated and favourable treatment in the multilateral trade and development financing arenas. The rationale for recognizing the SIDS category was recalled as implying a need to respond to the structural disadvantages faced by these countries, through island-specific international

support measures. The success achieved by the United Nations in increasing the level of international awareness of the particular problems faced by island States was well recognized by the panel. However, the absence of translation of this recognition into concrete international responses to the relevant problems was noted by the panelists, despite UN efforts, over three decades, to encourage such special treatment.

The panel noted that the ambivalence of the SIDS definition did serve to undermine the chances of SIDS gaining special treatment. The panel shared with several participants the view that two approaches to this problem should be pursued by the United Nations to respond to this concern: first, in the short run, the UN should support SIDS in a number of immediate requests that could be reiterated at the Mauritius International Meeting; secondly, in the longer run, concerted efforts by relevant agencies and bodies of the UN system could aim at introducing a set of criteria for determining a list of SIDS that would strengthen these countries' chances of gaining special treatment. The discussion generated a consensus on the importance of advocating the following three immediate objectives: (i) maintaining maximum preferential market access for all SIDS; (ii) promoting compensatory financial and investment-related measures to offset the negative consequences of island-specific costs in the context of trade preference erosion; and (iii) reforming the graduation rule to do justice to highly vulnerable Least Developed SIDS that have reached graduation thresholds.

The question of graduation from LDC status was recognized by the panelists and several participants, not only as an issue of considerable importance to the few SIDS that are directly affected by it, but also, as an illustration of the "island paradox" whereby SIDS tend to be regarded as relatively prosperous in the light of their income per capita performance although they are among the most economically vulnerable countries in the world, and among the least prepared to lose the benefit of concessionary treatment, considering the huge structural economic costs they are faced with as a result of their intrinsic disadvantages. They noted that a way of remedying this problem might be to reform the graduation rule by ensuring that no LDC that does not pass the graduation threshold under the Economic Vulnerability Index would be regarded as technically eligible for graduation.

Issues of supply capacities were underlined as being of critical importance to SIDS, as panelists noted that the desirable market access preferences would be of little use if the capacity to produce more and better exportable goods and services did not exist. Entrepreneurship was described as a vital engine of economic specialization, and the importance of encouraging it through appropriate investment-related policies was underlined by several

panelists and participants. Some took the view that, inducing emulation toward entrepreneurial involvement among sensitized young islanders is one of the best approaches to sustainable development, particularly with regard to sustainable tourism development and exports of organic agricultural products, two economic areas of special relevance to SIDS. In this regard, the importance of niche markets was reiterated by the panel, which noted several success stories from the Caribbean and the Pacific in this area.

The importance of sustainable tourism development was stressed as involving not only supply capacity issues, but also trade policy issues of relevance to the General Agreement on Trade in Services in the WTO. The panel noted a recent proposal that Caribbean SIDS could take the initiative to form an informal "friends of tourism" group in the WTO, with a view to facilitating progress toward better prevention, through the multilateral trading framework, of anti-competitive practices in the tourism economy of SIDS. Such practices are seen as major sources of financial leakages from the tourism economy of many SIDS, and should be prevented through multilaterally agreed rules. The importance of the relationship between trade and the environment was underlined, with particular reference to the need to refine currently existing regulations among importing countries, and make certification requirements and standards more island-friendly.

The importance of financing for development in the review of the Barbados Programme of Action was also stressed by the panel, which noted that the prospects for reversing the declining trend in official development assistance to SIDS are not encouraging.

Many of these issues (competitiveness, entrepreneurship, the need for continued preferential treatment on grounds of "small islandness") were recognized as symptoms of the fallout of the banana production industry over the last decade. This was pointed out by the panel's moderator, who used this example in his introductory and concluding remarks as an illustration of the difficulties faced by SIDS in their efforts to avoid further marginalization from the global economy.

Panel Discussion IV

"Promoting Cultural Diversity, Developing Cultural Industries and Empowering Youth"

The panel took as its starting point the position that cultural diversity and the protection of the cultural heritage of SIDS are critical to their continued survival, given the pivotal role of culture in identity formation, social cohesion and stability.

Moreover, panelists agreed that there are significant socio-economic benefits for SIDS to be derived from developing cultural and entertainment industries in such areas as music, art, crafts, literary and culinary arts, fashion, festivals, theatre, film and cultural tourism. But for the most part, such indigenous cultural industries?which could provide a comparative advantage to local entrepreneurs in SIDS?remain largely untapped potential resources.

The panel considered a number of ways to facilitate and support the development of cultural industries in SIDS. They linked this with strategies to train and empower youth and women so as to enhance their employment opportunities and help reduce poverty.

The panel recommended that technical and financial assistance be provided to SIDS governments to develop their cultural policies and appropriate legislative frameworks and institutions in support of their indigenous cultural industries. It called for upgrading and expanding training opportunities and institutions in SIDS, with emphasis on the artistic, managerial, and technical aspects of cultural industries.

Noting that the marketing of cultural products and services needs to be improved in most SIDS, the panel also urged efforts to boost competitiveness and export capabilities through business support services, and emphasized the need for a SIDS presence at regional and international trade fairs. Participants saw a need for technical assistance to NGOs and other civil society organizations in areas such as marketing, copyright protection, design, artist and festival management for cultural industry development.

Improved institutional capacity, advocacy and networking capabilities of public and private cultural organizations, professional associations, copyright organisations, cultural events and ventures, especially festivals, were called for, as well as support for infrastructural development of educational institutions with programmes in the arts and the development of venues which present the arts and festivals.

Panelists identified the need to diversify the tourism product by supporting the development of cultural, economic, environmental, sports and health tourism with emphasis on youth involvement.

They urged capacity-building for research and data collection of economic impact data, including employment, exports and sales data. They also called for capacity-building of local museums, galleries, libraries and other documentation centres to collect, preserve and disseminate information on the cultural heritage of SIDS and to promote greater cultural exchange among artists in SIDS.

Panelists recommended support to strengthen SIDS' capacity in international trade negotiations dealing with intellectual property issues. They called for venture capital and access to credit for small and medium sized enterprises in cultural industries.

Stressing the regional component, the panel urged the development of regional media entities in each of the SIDS regions for the exclusive promotion of cultural products, services and tourism. Finally, they called for the establishment or strengthening of regional cultural funds in all the SIDS regions to provide a source of long term finance for cultural projects and initiatives.

Panel Discussion V

"Towards knowledge-based societies: building capacities for more effective application of science and technology in SIDS"

The panelists focused their remarks on aspects of capacity-building in SIDS and, in particular, the role of science and technology. They agreed that the effective application of science and technology was essential for socio-economic development as well as for longer-term sustainable development. They urged that South-South and SIDS-SIDS cooperation, especially amongst research centres and scientific experts, be increased. They underscored the importance of regional and subregional cooperation.

The panelists discussed strategies to gain lessons and indicate best practices for the application of science and technology in SIDS. These in turn could help elaborate more "SIDS-sensitive" joint activities and donor funding. However, it was pointed out that science and technology is at best a tool; it alone can't solve all the problems. It was also suggested that local and traditional knowledge be better used as a kind of "applied science". This can be more cost-effective and relevant for many SIDS, and can build resilience.

While enhanced data gathering is required, panelists indicated that care should be taken to ensure that scientific data is converted to useful and practical information. This can help farmers and fishers in SIDS to become "change agents" in their communities. Universities and research institutes can facilitate this kind of practical knowledge-sharing, with the support of donors and the private sector.

It was stressed that education and training in science and technology must be seen by SIDS (both governments and people) as an investment and not an expense. International donors and the private sector can facilitate the development of ideas from research to innovation, and then to commercialization and marketing. SIDS could make better use of their comparative advantages, such as an abundance of sunshine, which could be converted to solar energy.

The circumstances in each country within which science and technology works, including the economic, legal and political framework, as well as infrastructure and education, are crucial factors. For example, the role played by privatization in pollution control and waste conversion in some SIDS is not applicable in others. But even different systems can provide useful lessons learned.

It was also suggested that SIDS' common element of smallness requires a "downscaling" in scientific research and applications. For example, the view was expressed that the "macro" models currently used in studying climate change are not helpful to SIDS, since they only provide general trends, while policy makers require more precise analyses of actual conditions, which can be used as a baseline for future predictions. There is therefore concern that such "micro" climate models might not be available for another 10 years.

The importance of SIDS-specific needs assessments for technology transfer was stressed, and assistance from the United Nations and other international and regional organizations was called for. This could facilitate priority setting at sectoral levels. It was suggested that an inventory of technologies in SIDS, both indigenous and imported, should be prepared. Such an inventory could be disseminated over the SIDSnet website and would facilitate information exchange and SIDS-SIDS cooperation.

There was general agreement on the need to better promote SIDS interests and concerns at all relevant international meetings and fora?to "mainstream" SIDS into the multilateral agenda. In particular, the forthcoming International Conference for Renewable Energy (Bonn, 1-4 June 2004) and the World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis, 2005) were highlighted as important opportunities to showcase SIDS' science and technology needs and capacities.

Panel Discussion VI

"Building resilience: strategies for overcoming risk, uncertainty and vulnerability in SIDS"

In focusing on building resilience in SIDS, the Panel considered issues related to governance, technological knowledge and capacities, risk management and disaster preparedness, international trade negotiations and institutional and administrative structures. Much of the discussion dealt with the definition, construction and use of various vulnerability indices, as tools to monitor and assess the special risks affecting SIDS.

Noting that SIDS face a number of structural economic vulnerabilities--such as high transportation costs and remoteness from major markets--participants were concerned that SIDS were not recognized as an especially vulnerable group by the Economic

Vulnerability Index (EVI) used by the United Nations as one of three criteria for the identification of least developed countries (LDC). It was further noted that the only two countries currently recommended to the UN Economic and Social Council for "graduation" from LDC status are, in fact, SIDS (Cape Verde and Maldives), although a final decision on this has been postponed by member States. It was generally felt by all the speakers on the Panel that the questions of graduation and smooth transition from LDC status required special consideration of the particular vulnerabilities facing SIDS.

In addition to the UN Economic Vulnerability Index, reviewed triennially by the Committee for Development Policy for consideration by the Economic and Social Council, several other vulnerability indices of direct relevance to SIDS were discussed. The Environmental Vulnerability Index (also called EVI) developed by SOPAC (South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission), based in Fiji, is currently being tested in 14 Pacific island States, with the assistance of donor countries and organizations. The index, which is expected to be completed by the time of the Mauritius International Meeting, builds on the decision of the World Summit for Sustainable Development in 2002 to support the finalization and early operationalization of economic, social and environmental vulnerability indices and related indicators for the achievement of the sustainable development of SIDS.

Another vulnerability index discussed by its creator, Prof. Lino Briguglio of Malta, one of the Panelists, is called the Economic Vulnerability Index Adjusted for Resilience (EVIAR). Note was also made that UN/ECLAC is developing a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) for the Caribbean region.

Besides the construction and operationalization of various vulnerability indices, the Panel also discussed what actions are needed to actually build resilience in SIDS. Beyond more technical reports, the implementation of projects and financial assistance are required to adapt to the risks faced by SIDS. Looking at trade issues, the view was expressed that current WTO rules do not favour most small economies, including SIDS. Noting that only 10 percent of SIDS are WTO members, support for granting easier access and representation at the WTO was called for. In addition, exemption from sanctions against some subsidies imposed by SIDS was urged, as well as calls for monetary compensation.

Increased flows of foreign direct investment are essential, as well as the transfer of technology, in particular, to help SIDS better exploit their natural resource base. It was the view that SIDS?as the traditional custodians of the oceans?can only grow their economies through developing their ocean resources, especially fisheries resources, as the mainstay for food security and employment. But new

and increasing risks threaten these resources, and must be counteracted.

Noting that disasters are first and foremost a major threat to development, and that recent hurricanes, cyclones and floods in several SIDS have wiped out years of development efforts, disaster risk reduction management and targets were urged for the sustainable development of SIDS. In this connection, links were made between the Mauritius International Meeting and the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, to be held in Japan in January 2005.

It was also suggested that AOSIS should be "institutionalized", with representation in various capitals and more presence at international meetings, and that SIDSnet be expanded and strengthened to support this and to enhance SIDS' own research capacities.